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Müller-Böker, Ulrike

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Author(s): Ulrike Müller-Böker

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SPATIAL ORGANIZATION OF A CASTE SOCIETY: THE EXAMPLE OF THE NEWAR IN THE KATHMANDU VALLEY, NEPAL¹

ULRIKE MÜLLER-BÖKER
Geographisches Institut
Justus-Liebig-Universität
Senckenbergstrasse 1
6300 Giessen, Federal Republic of Germany

ABSTRACT Even today, within the multinational state of Nepal, the Newar of the Kathmandu Valley form a microcosmic society with their own culture and a caste system which is regarded by other Nepali as being extremely orthodox. More than 30 castes exist within the relatively small group of Newar.

The classification of castes correlates with a ritual and economic allocation of the various functions to be carried out within the population, and is manifested spatially in the tendency of the various castes toward segregation. Moreover, there are definite differences between caste structure and, therefore, functional divisions in the settlements. As there are often only a small number of castes in one settlement, the Newar village can very rarely be regarded as an autonomous unit. Ritual and economic relationships have to be built up beyond the confines of the settlement.

The Newar caste system, the individual castes, and the types of interaction between them are outlined here. As an aid to understanding the functional structure of rural Newar settlements a cartographic presentation of the Newar caste system is given.

RÉSUMÉ *L'organisation spatiale d'une société de castes: l'exemple des Newars dans la vallée de Kathmandou.* Même de nos jours, dans l'état multinational du Népal, les Newars de la vallée de Kathmandou forment une société microcosmique avec sa propre culture et un système de castes considéré par les autres népalais comme étant extrêmement orthodoxe. Plus de 30 castes existent au sein de ce groupe de Newars qui est relativement petit.

La classification des castes correspond à une attribution rituelle et économique parmi la population des diverses fonctions à remplir, et se manifeste dans l'espace par une tendance des diverses castes vers la ségrégation. En outre, il existe des différences marquées de structure de castes, et donc de divisions fonctionnelles parmi les villages. Comme il n'y a souvent qu'un petit nombre de castes dans un village, les villages Newars peuvent rarement être considérés comme des unités autonomes. Des relations rituelles et économiques doivent se développer au delà des limites du village.

Le système de castes des Newars, les castes elles-mêmes et les types d'interaction entre elles sont passés en revue dans cet article. Une représentation cartographique du système de castes des Newars est également fournie pour aider à comprendre la structure fonctionnelle des villages Newars.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG *Die räumliche Organisation einer Kastengesellschaft: Das Beispiel der Newar im ländlichen Kathmandu-Tal, Nepal.* Die Newar des Kathmandu-Tals stellen auch heute noch eine mikrokosmische Gesellschaft innerhalb des Vielvölkerstaates Nepal dar, mit einer eigenständigen Kultur und einem – von den übrigen Nepalesen als ausgesprochen orthodox bewerteten – Kastensystem. Mehr als 30 Kasten lassen sich innerhalb der relativ kleinen Gruppe der Newar ausgliedern.

Die Kastengliederung entspricht einer rituellen und ökonomischen Funktionsaufteilung innerhalb der Bevölkerung. Sie manifestiert sich räumlich in der Tendenz der verschiedenen Kasten, sich voneinander abzugrenzen. Dabei zeigen sich deutliche Unterschiede in der Kastenstruktur der verschiedenen Siedlungen und damit in der funktionalen Gliederung. Aufgrund der häufig kleinen Zahl von Kasten in einer Siedlung, kann das Newar-Dorf deshalb nur selten als autonome Einheit angesprochen werden, rituelle und ökonomische Beziehungen müssen über Siedlungsgrenzen geknüpft werden.

Das Newar-Kastensystem, die verschiedenen Kasten und ihre Interaktionsformen werden in diesem Beitrag skizziert. Schlüssel zum Verständnis des Funktionsgefüges der ländlichen Newar-Siedlungen ist die kartographische Darstellung der Kastenstruktur im gesamten Kathmandu-Tal und beispielhaft innerhalb einzelner Dörfer.

INTRODUCTION

The Kathmandu Valley, about 30 km long and 17 km wide, is enclosed by the southern slopes of the Himalaya in the north and the Mahabharat range in the south (Haffner, 1979). Here an advanced, urban civilization, the

¹Editor's note: It is greatly appreciated that the coloured maps, Figures 1-5, were provided by the author.

The names of Newar castes and places have been transliterated; diacritical marks are included on the maps but have been omitted in the text due to the high costs of typesetting such marks.

protagonists of which are the Newar, developed in early times and was dependent on irrigated rice cultivation. In the course of time, other ethnic groups came to the valley, Newar rulers were deprived of their power, and the Newar people became integrated into the present state of Nepal. Nevertheless, even today, the Newar form a microcosmic society within the multinational state of Nepal, with ethno-specific types of organization and economy, their own individual, highly developed culture, and a caste system which is regarded by other Nepalis as being extremely orthodox.

According to the 1981 Language Census (HMG, 1984), 35.8 percent of the 766,345 inhabitants of the Kathmandu Valley claimed to be Newari speakers (in 1971, 46.2 percent). In addition, smaller groups of Newar tradesmen live in bazaar settlements outside the Valley. More than 30 castes (*jat*) exist within this relatively small group of Newar and they in turn can be broken down into numerous sub-castes. The Newar caste system in the Kathmandu Valley is held to be one of the most complicated in the whole of South Asia (Toffin, 1984: 221), and an analysis of the system is essential to an understanding of the socio-economic structure of the Newar settlements. Thus, the Newar caste system, the individual castes, and the types of interaction between them will be outlined here.

The key to understanding the functional structure of rural Newar settlements is the cartographic presentation

of caste structure for the whole of the Kathmandu Valley and within certain villages in particular. Although the majority of the inhabitants of the three large cities of the Valley (Kathmandu, Patan, and Bhaktapur) are Newar, these urban centres have been largely excluded, as traditional Newar culture has been best retained in rural areas where it has been less affected by modernization than in the cities.

There is a great deal of literature concerning the caste system. Besides theoretical studies, such as Leach (1962), Hutton (1963), Dumont (1964, 1970), Inden and McKim (1974), and Weber (1978), there are numerous individual investigations which, however, are mainly concerned with India. Rarely does one come across geographic extensions of this topic as, for example, Bronger's (1970) study of the socio-geographic influence of the caste system on settlements and agricultural structures in southern India. This also applies to the Newar caste system, which so far has been investigated mainly from an ethnological or indological perspective. Important works in this field are: Chattopadhyay, 1923; Fürer-Haimendorf, 1956; Nepali, 1965; Rosser, 1966; MacDonald, 1970; Allen, 1973; Gutschow and Kölver, 1975; Toffin, 1975, 1977, 1978, 1984; Bista, 1976; Doherty, 1978; Greenwold, 1978; Höfer, 1979; Ishii, 1980; and Herdick, 1982.

THE NEWAR CASTE SYSTEM

The Newar are not an ethnic group of homogeneous origin. Lévi (1905: 221) states that they are said to have come from the north into the Valley with the great Buddhist Bodhisattva Manjusri. Regmi (1960: 60), on the other hand, believes that the Kirati, who settled in the Valley around the seventh century BC, were probably the ancestors of at least one group of Newar. Nepali (1965: 31) also claims to have discerned South Indian and Austro-Asian elements in their descent. Fürer-Haimendorf (1956: 15) does not rule out either influence, but in his opinion there is no evidence that the Newar have not inhabited the Kathmandu Valley since prehistoric times. However, the Newar have evolved into a culturally independent people over the centuries from a large number of different migrant groups. The transition from a society characterized by Buddhism to one largely orientated toward Hindu values did not take place until the end of the fourteenth century.

More recent chronicles state that the Newar King Jayastiti Malla (1332-1395) divided up the population of the Kathmandu Valley into 64 castes; each caste was given a certain occupation and he also determined which priest, the Buddhist Gubhaju or the Hindu Brahmin, was responsible for the spiritual welfare of each caste (Lévi, 1905: 230; Wright, 1958: 111). However, Regmi (1965: 651) contends that it was unlikely that a single ruler could totally restructure a whole society and, as older chroniclers make no mention of the introduction of castes, his opinion seems reasonable. It is possible that the adoption of the Buddhist Vajrayana school, which had developed about the fifth century AD by way of Hindu influences on Buddhism, in

the early medieval period brought with it caste-like subdivisions of society. However, the formation of castes among the Buddhists cannot be put down to this cult alone, which was imported from India and reflected social conditions. Groups of Hindus, who kept caste rules, already existed, especially in the circle around the Royal Family (Lienhard, 1978: 149). It is possible that Jayastiti Malla enforced the process of "Hinduization" and thus the increasing importance of social hierarchy, and perhaps it was even codified at this time. However, a certain amount of social stratification must have been already in existence, based on a distinct division of labour and implemented by the various groups of new immigrants to the Valley.

Historical events and political interventions have modified the caste system since the Malla period. (The ruling dynasties of the Kathmandu Valley are shown in Table 1.) Under the Malla kings the leading Newar classes were integrated into the Kshatriya Varna (warriors)¹ but after the seizure of power by the Shah in the eighteenth century²

¹In the classic form of Hinduism, a caste society is based on four Varnas (colours): Brahmins (priests), Kshatriya (warriors), and Vaishya (the people), the holders of the holy cord. The fourth Varna is the Varna of the Shudra, members of which are there to serve the others. Not included in these Varnas are the untouchables, the non-Hindu.

²The ancestors of Prithivi Narayan Shah, the conqueror of the Kathmandu Valley, were members of leading Rajput families, who had fled from India in the fourteenth century into the mountains of West Nepal, where they soon gained political supremacy. Numerous small principalities came into being, including the principality of Gorkha which was the centre for the policy of expansion of the Shah dynasty in the eighteenth century.

TABLE 1

Ruling dynasties in the Kathmandu Valley (Slusser, 1982: 18)

Licchavi kings	About 300 BC–AD 879
Transition phase	About AD 879–1200
Early Malla kings	1200–1482
Late Malla kings	1482–1769, the era of the three kingdoms
Shah kings	1769 up to the present, but interrupted by loss of power for a century
Rana Prime Ministers	1846–1951, <i>de facto</i> seizure of power by prime ministers belonging to the Rana family

certain groups were degraded into the Vaishya Varna. As a result of being defeated, the Newar are banned from military service even today. In 1854 the Rana attempted to integrate all the ethnic groups in Nepal, including the existing Newar system, into one single caste system (Höfer, 1979: 39) by means of national legislation. The trend towards Hinduism has not yet come to a standstill. According to its constitution, Nepal is a Hindu kingdom, which taps the powers of integration inherent in the Hindu religion in its attempt at nation building. Although the caste system has not been anchored in the legislation since 1963, in practice it determines the socio-economic situation of each Nepali, as it has always done, and in a particularly orthodox way, the situation of the Newar.

THE NEWAR CASTES

The existence of Buddhist castes is characteristic of the Newar caste system. The division between Buddha and Shiva worship is clearly defined among the priestly castes, whereas among the other castes one can only talk of religious tendencies. Size and inner organization of the Newar castes differ greatly. There is no general consensus as to the status of all castes, but a definite gap is always evident between pure and impure castes. For this reason, Table 2 shows Newar castes and their allotted occupation but it does not attempt to classify them exactly within a hierarchy, as that can be realized only from the specific point of view of each caste.

Table 3 shows the typical combinations of caste and profession found in rural Newar settlements today. One can see that employment structures are only to a limited extent determined by caste membership. In principle, farming is allowed for nearly all castes, not only for the actual farming caste (Jyapu). However, there are important exceptions to this rule. In addition to financial reasons, for example among wealthy traders (Shrestha), there are religiously motivated traditions for refusing to farm the land. Land is only grudgingly leased to untouchables owing to their impure status, and they seldom own land themselves. On the other hand, priest castes reject the idea of work in the fields for reasons of purity and status.

As the farms in the Kathmandu Valley are very small, many households are dependent upon an extra income to supplement that gained from farming. Thus, many Jyapu,

Opinions differ as to the definition of caste (*jat*). Nevertheless, an attempt will be made to summarize the main characteristics (Hutton, 1963: 49; Weber, 1978: 22). One is born into a caste; a caste is endogamous; usually one particular occupation is associated with a certain caste; the status of a certain caste is determined by the Brahmins (priest caste), who rank highest in the hierarchy. Clearly defined modes of interaction are expected of the various castes. The caste system affects all areas of an individual's life and determines his or her social status. It regulates the relationships of caste members to each other and to other castes. Society is divided up into clearly defined groups, whose relations toward each other are arranged within a strict hierarchy. The castes are dependent upon each other economically due to their division into various occupational groups, and certain castes are responsible for ritual duties. A fine network of interrelationships and interdependencies characterizes the caste system.

Nevertheless, one should avoid the stereotypical view of the various castes. Prosperity, job status, and place of residence do not change the membership of a certain caste, but they do help define social status, especially at the present time. Modern jobs, which have no allotted rank within the caste system, are modifying rigid caste boundaries. For example, spiritual teachers always used to be Pandits, who were members of the priest caste. In theory, a schoolteacher can now come from any caste—except, of course, from an impure one!

as well as members of lower castes, find themselves a second, supplementary job as a farm or construction labourer, or porter. The traditional, caste-specific occupations (such as dyer, potter, blacksmith) and ritual services (musician, funeral assistant) are combined with work in the leased or individually owned fields. A kind of “double occupation” is therefore typical among the Newar, and this is economically beneficial and often necessary.

The following is an outline of the main Newar castes in a society where Hinduism and Buddhism intermesh:

The *Barmu* (Brahmin) rank highest in Hindu, Newar society. Their ancestors were brought into the Kathmandu Valley as priests to the court by the Malla kings. Today they are temple and family priests. Their Buddhist counterparts are the *Gubhaju* (Bajracarya) and *Bare* (Shakya). Children belonging to both these castes are first treated as one caste, and it is not until the *acah luigu* ceremony that Gubhaju boys receive the insignia of a family priest and so become Gubhaju. Both groups are responsible for the Buddhist temples (*bahal*). Unlike the Hindu Barmu, Gubhaju and Bare are engaged in other trades besides their priestly duties. Traditionally they work as goldsmiths and silversmiths, metal casters, and tailors. They also run businesses and can often be found in high administrative posts. Most receive considerable incomes from land which they have leased.

The *Syasyah* (Shrestha) are the largest caste in the Kathmandu Valley. As is the tendency of a caste society, much

TABLE 2
Newar castes

Barmu/Brahmin ¹	Temple and family priests
Gubhaju/Bajracaraya ²	Priests, gold and silversmiths
Bare/Shakya ²	Temple priests, metal casters
Syasyah/Shrestha ¹	Trade and businessmen
1. Chathari	(e.g., Acaju-tantric priests, Amatya-ministers)
2. Pacthari	(e.g., Josi—astrologists, Malla-businessmen)
3. Tini	
Uray/Udas	Tradesmen, coppersmiths
Jyapu	Farmers
Kumah/Kumale	Potters
Gathu/Mali	Farmers, gardeners
Rajthal	Farmers, producers of brewer's yeast and rice flakes
Chipa/Ranjitkar	Dyers
Saymi/Manandhar	Oil pressers
Pu/Citrakar	Painters
Kau/Nakarmi	Blacksmiths
Nau/Napit	Barbers
Khusah/Khusal	Sedan bearers
Bhah	Funeral assistants
Dui	Porters, labourers
Balami	Farmers, traders of water buffalo
Nay/Kasai	Butchers
Jvagi/Kusle	Tailors, musicians
Dva	Drummers
Pvah/Pore	Basket weavers, fishermen, sweepers
Kulu	Drum makers, cobblers
Cyamkhalah/Cyame	Dung bearers, sweepers

¹Hindu.²Buddhist.

Where Nepali names exist, they follow the Newari caste names.

segregation has occurred within this group (Rosser, 1966: 101). Jobs in trade and business are allocated to the Shrestha, but in the villages many of them are also engaged in farming.

The Buddhist *Uray* (Udas) caste is concentrated mainly in Kathmandu although a few Uray families live in Newar villages. Fürer-Haimendorf (1956:10) calls them the descendants of Bare men and Tibetan women. The Uray did in fact have a trade monopoly with Tibet and formed a small Newar colony in Lhasa. Up to this day they have remained wealthy traders and craftsmen.

INTERACTION BETWEEN CASTES

The various types of interaction between the castes are regulated by ritualized modes of behaviour. Interpretation of these modes varies locally and individually, but the gap between pure and impure castes is clearly defined everywhere. There are two groups from the point of view of the pure castes. They correspond roughly to the groups which can either claim the services of a priest and from which

TABLE 3
Typical caste-occupation combinations in rural settlements of the Kathmandu Valley

	Usual castes involved
Agriculture	Jyapu
Agriculture and seasonal/temporary labouring	Jyapu and low castes, some Shrestha (very rarely)
Agriculture and craftsman's trade	Kumah, Rajthal, Chipa, Pu, Kau, Saymi
Agricultural and retail trade	Shrestha and certain lower castes
Agriculture and ritual services	Nau, Nay, Jvagi, Dui, Dva
Agriculture and a "modern job"; medium or low qualifications	Impure to middle class castes
Ritual services and husbandry	Impure castes
Leasing land and ritual services	Hindu priest castes
Leasing land, ritual services, and craftsmanship	Buddhist priest castes
Leasing land and trade	Shrestha
Leasing land and "modern job"; higher qualification	Higher castes

The *Jyapu* can be defined as a farming caste, as it includes most of the Newar who live mainly off their incomes from agriculture. The *Kumah* (Kumale), potters and farmers, are classed either as a subcaste or as a caste of the same status.

After the *Jyapu* comes a group of castes which are more or less of the same social status although each caste usually claims the highest rank in the group for itself. Artisan castes and castes which have ritual duties belong to this group.

Dui and *Balami* occupy a special position within Newar society owing to their history of migration. Their position on the fringe of society is manifested in spatial segregation and in their cultural idiosyncracies which do not conform to the "Newar style".

The impure castes are strictly segregated from the castes mentioned above, both in society and religion. Even so, the impure but touchable *Jvagi* (Kusle) play an important role in religious rituals as musicians and attendants of certain gods. The *Dva*, the drummers, rank a little lower. Unlike the *Jvagi*, the *Nay* (Kasai) usually live on the outskirts of settlements, keep pigs, and work as butchers.

A pronounced gulf exists between those who were known as "touchables" and as "untouchables" within the impure castes. The "untouchables" are in a particularly bad economic position due to the fact that they have no land. They are dependent on begging, payment in kind for "defiling" services, and on income from keeping animals (pigs).

one may accept water, and the group from which one may not accept water—the impure¹ (Hodgson, 1880: 245;

¹Everybody finds him or herself in a state of impurity at one time or another (Lienhard, 1986): birth, death, menstruation, impure food, impure contacts, etc. Pure castes can regain their purity in purification ceremonies, but this is impossible for impure castes.

MacDonald, 1970: 141; Toffin, 1978: 467; Müller, 1984: 46).

Observance of marriage rules, that is, observance of caste or subcaste endogamy, is essential in a caste system. Nevertheless, the marriage system is not so strict as the rice-eating system. For the Newar, cooked rice (*bhat*) is the type of food which is most subject to impurity. Thus, the members of a rice-eating group all belong to the same caste. In the case of large castes, subgroups are formed. Also clearly defined is the group of people who can smoke a hookah together. Variations do exist, however, as to what extent the pipe may be shared (Nepali, 1965: 146). Another criterium of distance between groups is the number of storeys in a house to which the visitor may be admitted (the higher, the purer!).

It is the duty of certain castes to assist at rites of passage (birth, death, initiation, marriage). Women belonging to Jyapu, Nau, and Nay castes are midwives to certain higher castes. Bhah used to play an important role in death rituals for high Hindu castes. Greenwold (1978: 485) points out that the group of pure castes is divided into one group whose nails and hair are cut by the pure Nau caste and another, lower-ranking group, for whom this work is done by the impure Nay.

The *guthi* are a peculiarity of the Newar. The word "guthi" is derived from the Sanskrit *gosthi*, a meeting or

council, and they are traditional, cooperative organizations, the aims, activities, and members of which can vary greatly. The Devali *guthi* is a kind of institutionalization of the patrilinear, clan group; the main function of the inner caste Sana and Siguthi is to assist at the numerous rites which accompany a death (Toffin, 1975). The third type of *guthi*, membership of which is voluntary and cuts across caste boundaries, can pursue various aims, such as the organization of a religious feast or the carrying out of co-operative work. Thus, *guthi* membership brings economic advantages with it. At the same time, the *guthi* exercise an enormous amount of control over society. They ensure that the desired, traditional norms and values are kept. Far-reaching sanctions, which almost amount to social ostracism, are the punishment for anybody who breaks away from these norms. The *guthi* are, therefore, internal regulators of Newar society which bind relationships and caste organization even more closely to each other.

The examples of interaction groups — either of the same or different status — show that caste-specific behaviour is expected from each individual. Even the "impure" are anchored firmly in the social system as people who are responsible for carrying out important economic and ritual functions. In this sense they do not constitute a marginal group.

SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF CASTES IN THE KATHMANDU VALLEY

The above outline has indicated that a caste system can only function when a number of different castes are actually present in a certain area, as both economic and ritual tasks are closely associated with caste membership. The classification of castes correlates with the allocation of the various functions to be carried out within a population (Bronger, 1970: 97). Thus, one could presume that a microcosmic caste hierarchy, like the one described by Bronger (1970: 94) in Indian villages, is to be found in every Newar settlement. The actual situation in Newar villages, however, is different (Figure 1; Tables 4 and 5):

1. The number of castes in rural settlements ranges from only one in the village of Kagatigau to 19 in Sakhu.
2. Although almost all castes are to be found in the three large cities of the Valley, this is not the case in any of the villages.
3. The number of castes in a village is not directly related to its size. In Khokna, for example, a village numbering almost 3,000, there are only Jyapu (farmer caste) except for two "untouchable" families. On the other hand, there are nine different castes in Satungal, which has just over 2,000 inhabitants.
4. Shrestha are the predominant caste in almost half of the 39 villages investigated, although in 17 villages the Jyapu are predominant. Seven of these can even be termed as "pure" Jyapu villages. Only eight of the 39 settlements actually have a differentiated caste structure, whereby in Kirtipur (and the cities of Bhaktapur and Patan) it is the Jyapu who play the predominant role in terms of number; otherwise it is again the Shrestha who have the majority.

The concentration of Newar settlements in the central

and southwestern area of the Kathmandu basin is striking (Figure 1). This area is particularly suitable for intensive farming on account of its fertile soil, and so it is not surprising that the large Jyapu villages are situated there. The majority of Newar villages in the north of the Valley are inhabited by Shrestha (trading caste), most of whom farm the land. Quite a few Dui also live there, some of them in scattered settlements outside the compact Newar villages.

The map showing the distribution of castes (Figure 1) indicates that there are no settlements that have a pronounced caste hierarchy in the north of the Kathmandu Valley. With few exceptions, such settlements are to be found on the old trade routes (India-Tibet and local routes). Their early development as trade centres and their incorporation into territorial estates have furthered the process of division of labour, and thus the division of society. The northern area of the Kathmandu Valley is more thinly settled, poorer, and has much less infrastructure. Furthermore, one can observe that many rules and customs, which are usually regarded as being typical of the Newar (such as the taboo of ploughing with a team, the construction of multi-storey houses, carrying loads with a yoke), are not strictly adhered to by the inhabitants of the northern part of the Valley. There is every reason to suppose that rulers in the Kathmandu Valley were much less interested in the north than in the southwestern and central areas, for in the north there were no major trading routes nor any strategically important settlements. Moreover, ecological conditions were not exactly favourable for productive agriculture. Thus, courtiers and priests, wealthy traders and craftsmen, had no particular motivation to

TABLE 4
Castes in Newar settlements of the Kathmandu Valley

Balambu	<i>Jyapu</i> , Shrestha, Kau, Nau, Jvagi, Nay	Nala	Shrestha, Jyapu, Chipa, Nau, Saymi
Banepa	Shrestha, Gubhaju, Bare, Jyapu, Saymi a.o.; impure castes: 1 Jvagi family	Panauli	Shrestha, Uray, Barmu, Bare, Gubhaju, Jyapu, Kumah, Saymi, Bhah, Nau, Pichi, Dui, Nay, Jvagi, Pvah (Barré <i>et al.</i> , 1981: 26)
Baregau	<i>Jyapu</i> , Shrestha, Nay a.o.	Panga	Shrestha, Jyapu, Jvagi, Nay
Bore	Shrestha, Jyapu, Gubhaju, Kumah, Nau, Kau, Nay, Jvagi, Pvah	Pharping	Shrestha, Jyapu a.o.
Bosigau	<i>Jyapu</i> , Dui, Nay	Pyanggau	<i>Jyapu</i> , 1 Nau family (Figure 2)
Bulu	<i>Jyapu</i> , Desai, Shrestha, Jvagi	Sakhu	Shrestha, Jyapu, Saymi, Gubhaju, Nay, Nau, Jvagi, Barmu, Bare, Chipa, Bhah, Kumah, Dui, Pvah, Pu, Gathu, Dva (Figure 3)
Bungamati	<i>Jyapu</i> , Gubhaju, Shrestha and 12 other castes (Jacobsen, 1969: 112)	Sanagau	<i>Jyapu</i> , Shrestha, Jvagi
Capagau	Shrestha, Desai, Jyapu, Kau, Pu, Nau, Nay, Pvah, Bare (Toffin, 1977: 47)	Sanga	Shrestha, Jyapu, Nay, Saymi, Jvagi
Cobhar	<i>Jyapu</i> , Gubhaju, Bare	Satungal	<i>Jyapu</i> , Nay, Dui, Barmu, Kau, Saymi, Jvagi (Ishii, 1978: 505)
Dharamthali	Shrestha, Jyapu, many low and impure castes	Shrikhandapur	Shrestha, Jyapu, Barmu, a.o. (no untouchables)
Dhulikhel	Shrestha, Jyapu, Jvagi, Nay	Sunakothi	<i>Jyapu</i> , Barmu a.o.
Gaca	Shrestha, Dui, Nay	Thaiba	<i>Jyapu</i> , Desai, Barmu, Nay, Jvagi, Pvah
Harisiddhi	<i>Jyapu</i> , 1 Shrestha family, 2 Jvagi family, 2 Pvah family	Thankot	Shrestha, Jyapu a.o.
Kagatigau	Balambu	Theco	<i>Jyapu</i> , Gathu, Jvagi, Nay
Khokna	<i>Jyapu</i> , 2 Pvah family	Thimi	Shrestha, Kumah, Jyapu, Gubhaju, Barmu, Saymi, Nau, Kau, Pu, Bhah, Chipa, Jvagi, Nay (Figure 5)
Kirtipur	<i>Jyapu</i> , Shrestha, Gubhaju, Khusah, Saymi, Nay, Pvah, Jvagi, Kau, Nau, Bare, Chipa (Herdick, 1982)	Tokha	Shrestha, Jyapu, Kau, Pu, Barmu, Jvagi, Nay
Kisipiri	<i>Jyapu</i> , few Nay	Tupek	Shrestha, Dui, 2 Jvagi family
Lubhu	Shrestha, Jyapu, Rajthal, Nay, Nau, Jvagi, Gubhaju (Figure 4)	Tusal	Shrestha, <i>Jyapu</i>
Manmaiju	<i>Jyapu</i> , Dui, Saymi, Nay	Kathmandu	Shrestha a.o. (Greenwold, 1978)
Nagau	Shrestha, Jyapu, Jvagi, Nay	Bhaktapur	<i>Jyapu</i> a.o. (Gutschow and Kölver, 1975)
Nakdes	<i>Jyapu</i> , Gubhaju, Kau, Kumah, Jvagi, Nay	Patan	<i>Jyapu</i> a.o.

settle in this area, and thus no pronounced caste structure developed.

To sum up, it can be stated that there are definite differences between caste structures and therefore functional divisions in rural Newar settlements. The Newar village can only very rarely be termed an autonomous unit because

often there is only a relatively small number of castes in any one settlement. Members of certain castes must be brought in from other towns or villages for specialized ritual and economic tasks. Close, functional bonds between the various settlements are the result.

SPATIAL AND NUMERICAL DISTRIBUTION OF CASTES IN CERTAIN NEWAR SETTLEMENTS

If one compares the distribution of castes within the Newar settlements, the contrast between those villages in which one caste is predominant (Pyanggau and Tokha) and those that have a more or less distinct caste hierarchy becomes more obvious—as the following examples show (Table 5). It is, however, typical of all the settlements investigated that the group of Shrestha, Jyapu, Uray, and Kumah, which together form the middle-class of Newar society, always account for over 70 percent of the inhabitants. Along with the priestly and “occupational” castes, the impure castes play a minor role in terms of numbers. Furthermore, it is a characteristic feature of most Newar settlements that there are either no members of other ethnic groups or only a few families.

The social structure of Newar society is manifested in the tendency of the various castes toward spatial segregation which affects in turn the shape of the settlements. Wherever possible, members of each caste try to live

together in one neighbourhood. The compact settlement, which is so typical of the Newar, is a direct result of this. Nevertheless, the houses inhabited by impure castes usually tend to be situated outside the actual village. The area within the clearly defined settlement border is regarded as being of a much better “quality” than the surrounding area, which, from the point of view of the pure castes, is practically uninhabitable.

According to the Newar concept of a settlement, which has been greatly influenced by Indian ideas of how cities should be built (Schlingloff, 1969), towns and villages should not only be built with a view to practicality; they must also be invested with energetic qualities (Gutschow, 1982; Slusser, 1982). One aspect of this is that the settlement should be laid out in mandala form.¹ The religious

¹The mandala is a cosmic, magical diagram, usually circular, symbolizing the universe.

TABLE 5
Percentage of Newar castes in Thimi, Sakhu, Lubhu, Panauti, Kirtipur, Pyanggau, Khokna, and Satungal

Caste	Thimi	Sakhu	Lubhu	Pyanggau	Khokna	Satungal	Kirtipur	Panauti
Barmu	0.24	0.15	—	—	—	0.50	0.10	0.34
Gubhaju	2.13	5.40	0.20	—	—	—	3.20	0.17
Bare	—	0.70	—	—	—	—	0.60	2.55
Shrestha	52.60	61.10	61.50	—	—	32.50	12.90 ¹	60.20 ¹
Uray	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	8.34
Jyapu	3.91	10.40	21.00	98.80	99.50	51.50	65.00	4.27
Kumah	32.20	0.15	—	—	—	—	0.50	2.65
Gathu	—	0.30	—	—	—	—	0.40	—
Rajthal	—	—	10.60	—	—	—	—	—
Chipa	0.28	2.10	—	—	—	—	0.60	—
Saymi	2.13	3.50	—	—	—	0.50	3.10	2.55
Pu	0.62	0.15	—	—	—	—	0.10	—
Kau	1.12	0.60	—	—	—	0.50	1.10	—
Nau	0.68	2.80	1.80	1.20	—	—	0.80	2.03
Khusah	—	—	—	—	—	—	3.20	—
Pichi	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.31
Bhah	0.84	0.70	—	—	—	—	—	0.06
Dui	—	1.30	—	—	—	5.20	0.10	0.50
Balami	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Nay	2.13	5.10	3.70	—	—	8.80	3.00	5.00
Jvagi	1.12	3.10	0.60	—	—	0.50	1.60	1.30
Dva	—	1.00	—	—	—	—	0.10	—
Kulu	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Pvah	—	1.10	—	—	0.50	—	1.90	5.00
Cyamkhalah	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gaine	—	0.15	—	—	—	—	0.30	—
Kami	—	0.15	—	—	—	—	—	—
Damai	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.10	—
Sarki	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.06
Nepali-Brahmin	—	—	0.60	—	—	—	—	0.37
Tamang	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.72
Jangam	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.72
Muslim	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	0.06

¹Chathari have been included in the Shrestha group.

Sources: Thimi, Sakhu, Lubhu, Pyanggau, Khokna: author's studies, 1977, 1979, 1980; Satungal: Ishii, 1978: 507; Kirtipur: Herdick, 1982: 179; Panauti: Barré *et al.*, 1981: 26.

value of a home is believed to deteriorate in relation to distance from the centre and, thus, the higher castes have built their houses as near as possible to the centre or in the vicinity of temples, which in turn are situated on sites of high ritual value. This Hindu concept of ideal town-planning has obviously been more consistently realized in the Newar cities than in the smaller villages, where often only a small number of castes live. Even so, the belief that certain cosmic qualities (which become manifest by way of rituals and in the housing of gods) exist is still present and particularly evident in the way the castes are distributed over an area. This remains the case even when no homogeneous, clearly outlined form exists, as the following examples will show (Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5).

The plan of Pyanggau (Figure 2) is clearly different from that of the other settlements. The village itself, which consists of two facing rows of houses and a few detached houses to the west, is inhabited exclusively by Jyapu, with the one exception of a Nau (barber's) family, whose house is situated almost on the road several metres away from the

actual nucleus of the settlement. With this closed settlement type the Jyapu of Pyanggau have expressed their feeling of belonging together in a concrete form and their wish to be screened off from others. The location of the Nau house symbolizes the position of this family in village society. The Newar houses situated on the road (Capagau-Lele), which passes the village to the west, were built more recently. Jyapu and Shrestha from Pyanggau and neighbouring villages have settled there, because of overcrowding in their old villages and also because they expected certain economic advantages from this new housing site on the road. To the south is the scattered settlement of the Brahmins and Chetris, who belong to the Indo-Aryan, Nepali-speaking group of Parbatiya (mountain people), large numbers of whom live in the Kathmandu Valley.

Unlike Pyanggau, Sakhu (Figure 3) is occupied by representatives of almost all the Newar castes. Shrestha homes are found throughout the settlement. Shrestha traders and businessmen are predominant in the bazaar in the north-east. The large houses of the Gubhaju are situated in the

northern ward of Sakhu. Some of them are former Buddhist monasteries (*bahal*). A large Jyapu quarter has grown up to the east and smaller artisans' quarters can be observed, particularly on the outskirts of the southeast area of the settlement. Houses belonging to members of other castes, however, can always be found integrated in the various caste quarters. The homes of the impure Nay, Pvah, and Dva castes are situated away from the others outside the settlement boundaries, which are defined by ritual paths and gates. The impure Jvagi, however, all live inside the settlement; often they live in *sattals* close to the temples they help to maintain. These *sattals* are multi-storey buildings, donated to provide accommodation for pilgrims and ascetics and they may also house a god.

If one studies the caste structure map of Lubhu (Figure 4), one is particularly struck by the single row of houses in the north, which are inhabited by Rajthal. Although the Rajthal are a pure caste, the location of their homes suggests that their social rank used to be lower than it is today. This supposition is supported by the simple style in which their houses are constructed. The old palace (now destroyed) and the small temple area are mainly surrounded by clusters of Shrestha houses. Their dwellings are closely connected to each other and can often be reached by way of passages. Clusters of Jyapu houses can be found in the south and east, in the neighbourhood of which a few Nau families have settled. The housing district of the impure Nay families is only partially separated from the village. Surprisingly enough, the homes of the Nay are adjacent to Jyapu houses. The disintegration of spatial caste segregation and the associated evaluation of the spatial quality can best be observed to the west of Lubhu, although signs of it are also to be seen on the outskirts in the east. Shrestha and Rajthal families have constructed new buildings at a distance so that they cannot be confused with the areas typical for housing impure castes. On the eastern fringe of the village, a small, multi-caste bazaar is growing up.

If one takes a look at the map showing spatial distribution of all the castes present in Thimi (Figure 5), the concentration of Kumah (potters) in the north and Shrestha in the south is striking (Müller, 1981: 33). The housing quarters are inhabited almost exclusively by one caste. The most impressive example is the potters' quarter in the northwest area of the settlement. Where several families of different caste live inside one quarter, there is usually little difference in social status between them. As the religious and social values of a home increase as one progresses away from the outskirts of a settlement toward the centre, Gubhaju and Barmu houses are always found inside

the settlement, often adjacent to the temple or *bahal*. On the other hand, the houses of impure castes are almost always situated on the edge of the settlement, and, as the contoured map shows, even on the slopes of the terrace. Only a few Jvagi houses lie in the centre. Some of the craftsman castes settle on the fringe of the village; others are clustered together near the tanks which provide water for the dyers. Signs of the disintegration of spatial caste organization are scarcely discernible in Thimi, except for the area of the bazaar road in the north. This site has attracted traders and businessmen because of the opportunities it offers for commerce and, thus, the number of Shrestha there is correspondingly high. Other castes are also found there whose presence can be better explained by the practical advantages to be gained than by typical caste behaviour. Some Kumah have separated production of pottery from the sale; Pu (painters) have opened shops which cater mainly to the tourist trade. Both now profit from the opportune, commercial location for which they gave up their traditional homes. A similar development can be observed on the southern fringe of the settlement following the construction of the new Kathmandu-Bhaktapur road. More and more houses are being built in the vicinity of the bus stop, on some of the best rice land.

These examples of the spatial distribution pattern of Newar castes have shown that conceptions of the type of settlement of a caste society are not always realized in the ideal form. Nevertheless, it is possible to discern certain principles of spatial organization, despite the variations in spatial distribution of the castes in Pyanggau, Sakhu, Lubhu, and Thimi. Quarters that are inhabited by one caste only have sprung up again and again. Should a certain quarter house families of different caste, there is usually little difference in their social status. The most strictly enforced spatial segregation is that which involves the impure castes, whose houses are not only located at a distance from those belonging to the pure castes, but are also outside the settlement itself in an area which is regarded by pure castes as being uninhabitable. The Jvagi are one exception to the rule; they often inhabit houses in the centre. As soon as economic interests come to the fore, traditional modes of behaviour—evaluation of a site according to ritual criteria—may be abandoned. Recently, housing and business quarters of higher castes have sprung up on the outskirts, like those of the impure castes. The multi-storeyed houses of the higher castes, however, are situated on roads which promise plenty of traffic and thus good prospects for trade in the future.

THE TREND TOWARDS CHANGE IN THE CASTE SYSTEM

Even today, caste membership still determines to a large extent the profession, status, life-style, and economic behaviour of the Newar. It stabilizes the disproportionate possession and ownership structures (a topic which has not been discussed here) and conditions the existence of underprivileged groups. Nevertheless, there are signs that the rigid system is beginning to break down. A changing society is creating new jobs for which there are no allo-

cated places in the traditional system (such as school-teacher, taxi driver, industrial worker). Underprivileged groups are finding new sources of income for themselves. The increasing demand for meat from the tourist hotels, for instance, has brought about a considerable improvement in earnings for the butcher castes. Due to the increased demand in the cities, milk is now sold by impure castes, although this would have been unthinkable only a

few years ago, for milk is sometimes watered down and pure castes do not accept water from impure castes.

Spatial organization structures are also disintegrating because they often no longer fulfil practical requirements, such as the need for space in a growing population. Wealthy families are leaving the confines of their villages and putting

ritual factors aside for economic and practical reasons. The development of an infrastructure and the opening up of the Kathmandu Valley promotes this movement, particularly as the ability to think in terms of profitability and to react to economic stimuli in a flexible manner is in keeping with Newar tradition.

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